

## **Sources of Political Power and Instruments to Control it in Nahj-al-Balaghah**

Date of receipt: 26/08/2015

Date of acceptance: 22/12/2015

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### **Abstract**

Power is one of the components by which, Imam Ali (a.s.) the Master of Virtuous tried to moralize the politics. Thus, the researcher deals with the review of sources of political power and its controlling instruments in Nahj-al-Balaghah in library method. The ethical teachings are of specific significance in Islam. Islam is a social religion and its ethical issues are not merely personal and undertake the train of human in the area of management and politics too. The government administrators in their political behavior are exposed to serious damages and risks ethically. Identification of these damages and ways to treat them by using the teachings of the Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) in Nahj-al-Balaghah is very practical and a breakthrough for the administrators of the Islamic government. One of the most important findings of this research is considering the power as an instrument and ethicality of politics in the Imam Ali's (a.s.) intellectual system. He viewed the power as an instrument to achieve salvation and perfection of the society, revival of the expansion of lofty principles and objectives. In the Hazrat's political idea, knowledge, virtue and combination of these two in practice are two necessary conditions for management and ruling.

### **Key Words:**

Islam, Ali (a.s.), Nahj-al-Balaghah, Power Sources, Politics, Power Control Instruments.

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Political power in different systems prevailing in the world has different meanings which is subject to the despotic rules' and the arrogant' s sensual desires and each based on his profiteering policy and humanistic foundations presents a definition of the government. The common feature of these definitions can be considered in the authoritative attitude and ruling over the people. However, the government in the view of the religion and a ruler who has received his legitimacy from the Almighty God has a meaning apart from the meaning of royal ruling over the others.

This viewpoint, which opposite to humanistic attitude has placed authoritative attitude and human sensual passions as the pivot, introduces the God as the pivot of entity. This makes the divine leaders – of which one example is Emir of Believers (a.s.) – never use the terms monarchy and Sultan and instead of it they use the terms such as ruler, governor, shepherd and Imam and consider the economic, military and cultural issues as an instrument to amend the people, the main duty of the ruler and governor. (Jamil Hamud, 1421: 351, 354).

Politics encompasses all activities which directly or indirectly through gaining power by the government cause the reinforcement of government power and use of that power.

The domain of research is to generate and expand a set of knowledge of which their most important ones could be studied under the titles of politics and political theory. Politics is a field of social awareness whose duty is to make a regular identification of regulations ruling the political relations among the social forces inside the country and relations among the nations at international arena. (Alem, 1996: 30 , 31). The description of Ali's (a.s.) political thought and his viewpoints about power has always been noticed by historians and researchers. But amid these, the theory which distinguishes Imam Ali (a.s.) from other Islamic rulers is the ideal ruler and principality and credit view towards power. In this research, the researchers intend to respond to these questions:

Are there political topics in Nahj-al-Balaghah? What kinds of approaches have

been presented in Imam Ali's words? What are the foundations of politic targeting in the view of Nahj-al-Balaghah? In what form the political power has been recommended in Nahj-al-Balaghah? In the view of Imam Ali (a.s.), which kind of instruments cause the control of political power? Is the Imam's political policy applicable in the present age? Why taking model after Infallible Imams (a.s.) on different issues including politics has remained at the level of motto? What is the way to move out of the existing situation (motto-stricken situation) ? On this basis, researcher will deal with the review of the sources of political power and instruments to control it in Nahj-al-Balaghah.

### **The concept and features of politics and studying it from Imam Ali(a.s.)'s standpoint**

The term politics semantically means to protect the land, to secure and maintain, to rule, to administrate the servant, to rule, to judge, to expedience, to punish, to have a far-sighted attitude, to apply force, to torture, to torment, to reattribute, to judge and so on. (Dehkhoda). Politics is technically meaning whatever is related to a city, its administration and belongings. (Jasemi, 2006: 254). The technique of governing over human communities (Jasemi, 2006: 254). Also politics is a set of measures which are adopted by a government to administrate the country affairs. (Ali Agha Bakhshi, 1996: 202). Each issue which is related to government, management, to determine the form, intentions and quality of the activities of a government are among the items of political affairs. (Ashouri, 1987: 212). One who intend with the force of external security and internal understanding supply a specific political unit. (Farvand, 2005:213). To rule is to manage the society which takes place through policy making and producing order and applying power.

### **Political legitimacy from Imam Ali (a.s.)'s viewpoint**

In speech, theoretical and practical behavior of Hazrat Ali(a.s.), two main bases for the political legitimacy of religious system has been noticed. These two include: religious legitimacy and political legitimacy. (Alikhani, 1998:21). A precise view over Hazrat Ali (a.s.)'s behavior shows that Hazrat considers a

relation between the two domains of religion and politics. In Hazrat's view, religion is not evaluated only as an internal and ethical issue providing for individualist spiritual relation between God and human but religious laws has an active presence in the scene of social life. In fact, the mansion of politics is constructed on the pillar of religious laws and thus, the element of religion is involving and detrimental in politics. The idea of link between these two phenomena in general refers to the religious and monotheistic view of Hazrat Ali(a.s.). And it can be said that the political philosophy of Hazrat is the monotheistic-divine philosophy which forms the bases of his idea.

God is the absolute ruler over the whole universe and the social and worldly system as a part of the infinite realm of entity is also the creature and under the divine sovereignty. (Yousef:40; Younes:31-32; Alnas:1-3). In the Letter No. 31, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) elaborates it well. Government in the world has been shifted to human and as this shift has been made by God to human, so that the authority and political dominancy in the society has roots in the divine prescription. For this reason, any political authority and dominancy over humans should be stated by the sacred legislator. Imam Ali (a.s.) also points out that God has shifted the expedience and administration of some of you to some others. (Jafari, 2000:351).

### **The Qur-an, Foundation of Ali (a.s.)'s Politics**

Imam Ali (a.s.) considers the Qur-an respondent to human's social life issues (Nahj-al-Balaghah, Sermon 158) and the prophet (p.b.u.h.) as the certifier of the past divine message and a medicine for the pain and organism of the social life. (Nahj-al-Balaghah: Wisdom 313). He believes that the redevelopment of civil life is a part of the Qur-an missions. (Qomi, 1412:4 /iv). Imam, considers the understanding of the various levels of the Qur-an meaning as a divine gift and arisen from the specific notice of the prophet (p.b.u.h.) which has been entrusted on that Hazrat aiming at continuing the teaching of the Qur-an to the

Islamic Ummah. Referring to the speech by the holy prophet (p.b.u.h.) who stated,

“يا علي ان الله امرني ان انيك واعلمك لتعي، فانزلت هذيه الايه (تعيها اذن واعيه) (حاقه ١٢/١) فانت اذن واعيه لعلمي).

Sayooti, 1404: 267/viii). Oh Ali ! God has commanded me to keep you beside myself and teach to acquire. Then this Verse was sent down to him: (The hearing ears will grasp and understand it). Thus, to acquire and keep my knowledge, you are the hearing ear. He considers himself merit to receive the message of the prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h.) and thus, he used to say frequently:

سلوني عن كتاب الله فوالله ما نزلت آيه في كتاب الله في الليل ولا نهار ولا مسير ولا مقام، الا قراني اياه رسول الله و علمني تاويله. (Majlesi, 1983:89/ xli).

Ask me about the Book of God. Oath to God that there is no verse that –in the night and the day, during residence and while in a trip – that the prophet has not read to me and its interpretation.

Imam was in the opinion that his character and life is along with and associated with the Qur-an and the Qur-anic views. (Nahj-al-Balaghah: Sermon 122). Seven days after the demise of the prophet (p.b.u.h.) and the establishment of the caliphates in a house except the residence of the household of the prophet (p.b.u.h.) stated, “I am the Qur-an which has been left and they have turned their face towards it. (Koleini, 1404:28/viii).

Imam Ali (a.s.)after accepting the government, considered the Qur-an as the base of his ruling decrees and regulations and stated, “

فلما افضت الي، نظرت الى كتاب الله و ما وضع لنا و امرنا بالحكم به فاتبعته و ما استن النبي (ص) فاقتديته.

As the government affairs was entrusted to me, I viewed the Book of God and its regulations which has commissioned us to rule based on it and obeyed it and followed prophet's life (Nahj-al-Balaghah: Sermon 205). In a letter to the leaders of Khawarej, he wrote,"

فاني ادعوكم الى كتاب الله و سنه نبيه و ان اعلم فيكم بالحق و بما امرالله في كتابه .

Verily I call you to the Book of the God and prophet's tradition and that my treatment with you will be based on truth and God's commandments in the Qur-an (Mahmoudi, 2006:186/v).

Imam (a.s.) expected his governors and administrators that to adjust their political and administrative record with the standard of the Qur-an. In Malik Ashter's treaty, he points out,: Refer to God and His prophet in the confusing affairs which might put you into doubt. Referring to God, is to practice the strong verses of the Qur-an and return to the prophet is to refer to his tradition which is unifying. (Nahj al-Balaghah: Letter 53).

In a letter to Hares Hamedani, he recommends that Hold the rope of the Qur-an and take its admonishes, consider the lawful as lawful and unlawful as unlawful (Nahj al-Balaghah: Letter 53). The identity of divine caliph in the Qur-an theory and the political theory upon which Imam Ali (a.s.) puts forth the divine revelation teachings can be termed as the theory of vicegerent of Allah. From the viewpoint of worldview, it is relied upon a specific interpretation of origin and resurrection and human identification and in the nature means the vicegerent of Allah in ruling. Based on this belief, the right to govern in fact belongs to God but considering the competency and special conditions, it is shifted to a ruler to be the administrator of the God's commandments on His servants on the earth. (Sadr, 1991: 170). Interpreting the Verse 37 of Surah Baqara, and comparing Saul and Goliath, Imam (a.s.) asks: Do you believe that God has preferred The Umayyad to Bani Hashim and has given more knowledge and ability to Moaveiyeh?. Then God, after his Prophets, places the caliphates and ruling in the generation of prophet household (Tabarsi,1401: 173). Afterwards, in another place, he states,

“لو... جعلتم الولاية و الوراثه حثت جعلها الله ما عال ولي الله و لا طاش سهم من فرائض الله و لا اختلف اثنان في حكم الله و لا تنازعت الامه في شيء من امر الله، الا علم ذلك عندنا من كتاب الله. (Mahmoudi, 2006:399/i).

If you had considered the leadership and inheritance on an individual determined by God, the Guardian of God would not have faced poverty. No share of the divine share would have been consumed in unsuitable place. It would not have been possible then for two individuals face dispute about one decree out of divine decrees or Islamic Ummah about anything from God and do not find a Qur-anic response to that before us.

In his view, ruling has a divine origin and ruler puts the commandment into practice on behalf of God. For this very reason, Ali (a.s.) interprets his ruling through a term as Sultan of Allah (Sermon 169) and Sultan of Islam (Mahmoudi, 2006: i, 399) and Martyr Sadr also has accepted this term and employed it. (Sadr, 1991:161).

### **The concept and features of power of the Imam Ali's speeches**

#### **Power and its social concept**

Power in the dictionary has been defined as ability and capability (Dehkhoda), domination and influence of command (Amid Encyclopedia). Power in sociological knowledge means the ability of individuals or members of a group to achieve objectives or to advance their own interests, through making other individuals of the society to do a job which is against the desire of those individuals. (Rafipour, 1998: 56). Power in the terminological expression means the capacity or a potential ability and to change the others. (Afjeh, 2006: 372-373). Power is a social advantage which is noticed in stratification. Power can be obtained through membership in one social class or accepting a political role or through wealth or force. Charisma is one of the other factors affecting the rate of power of individuals. (Gidenz, 1997:238).

Researchers and thinkers of management, have identified seven types of powers. (Zarei, 2009: 156). Power and reward, means the power to provide the things which the individuals like. (Rezaiyan, 2007:24). This power, based on the degree of control of a person on the rewards which are valuable to others is measured. The power of reward might be in addition to material rewards, extent to other rewards (such as fame) too. (Moorhead & Griffin, 2006: 382-383). This power is exactly in the counter point of the power based on force.

Power of punishment: Power of punishment or force is crated when a person enjoys the ability of punishing or imposing a physical or mental damage on another person. Hence, it can be said that this power is based on the fear and horror of staffs and its base is fear or threat and it should be closely defined and used. (Lotanz, 1996:478).

The legal or legitimate power: The legal power is originating from the organizational positions and emphasizes on the formal position of an

individual. The source of the creation of power is organization and the rate of the legal power changes in terms of the type of an organization. (Moorhead & Griffin, 2006: 382-383) but the legitimate power is resulting from social values and norms. (Rezaiyan, 2006: 24).

**Power of competency and authority:** The individuals' perception of attractiveness of the interaction with a specific individual is called the power of competency or the power of authority of that individual. Whenever, the staffs attribute good features such as sincerity, honesty and faithfulness to the secrets to their own head, it is said that the head has an authority power. (Rezaiyan, 2006: 24). The power of authority (being a reference body) mostly is associated with trust, similarity, acceptance, affection, tendency to imitation and spiritual belongings. In usual, the authority power emerges in form of imitation. (Moorhead & Griffin, 2006: 385).

**The power of skill or expertise:** means the power to control the behaviors of others through having knowledge and experience. (Rezaiyan: 405). This power can emerge in different organizational positions. (Moorhead & Griffin, 2006: 385).

**Power of Information:** Having useful information or access to it is called information power. (Rezaiyan: 405).

**Relation Power:** That is the image resulting from access to organizational and environmental information. (Zarei, 2009: 157). In other words, the power of relation is resulting from the existence or image of link between manager or power centers inside or outside the organization. (Rezaiyan, 2006: 404).

**Inspirational(Encouraging) power:** This power is such that an individual can in the light of it allocate symbolic rewards to oneself. If an individual could decide on whom to be employed or could manipulate the mass media, grants post or degree or influence on norms and standards of the group, he holds the inspirational power. (Robbins & Stephen, 1995:669/ ii).

#### **Power in Imam Ali(a.s.)'s view**

Political power and dominancy in Islam is not by itself a goal and value and in comparison with the infinite and everlasting power of power is a degrading phenomenon. In fact, the value of

power is subject to the objectives and ideals of religion and employing it to attain the religious ideal situation. In the primary view of Hazrat, power and government is not a very costly commodity and Hazrat considers it less than goat's snivel.(Sermon 33). Imam Ali (a.s.) has a credit-based view towards power. In Imam's ideal idea, power does not have a value by itself, but it is only used in the direction of goodness. Power in Imam Ali's view is not original, so that to seek and keep it in every price but in Hazrat's view, the political power is credit-based one and access to it and keeping is not authorized by every methods. Ali (a.s.) was really fundamentalist and considered the principles more than governing. In fact power was not for him a principle and pivot but what was important to him was maintaining the school of thought(religion). In Ali (a.s.)'s views, the duty of government is to present service and establish justice and its credit is only in this direction. For this reason, Hazrat considered power at the service of revival and expansion of his concerned lofty goals and principles which was to revive the tradition of the prophet and Islamic original principles.

#### **Functions of justice in Imam(a.s.)'s political power**

As Hazrat Ali (a.s.) states, "خير السياسات العدل", i.e, the best policies is justice (Nazemzadeh 1996:395). Justice is the best policy for each government. This policy is necessary for the religious government because the base of job of messengers in religious government is to establish justice and equity. Adopting this policy in relation with that fundamental job, because of compatibility, has urgent results and prevents from the disruption and shake in the society due to the adoption of other policies. But the issue of the best policy for justice can be proved through its functions in the best way. These functions include the followings:

#### **Filling the gaps**

Following the passage of a long history and co-action with each other, all today's societies have been inflicted with various active and inactive gaps and suffer from this phenomenon and try to release from it. The religious societies have also been affected by this phenomenon. In these societies, acceptance of religion by the majority has led to

the religious gap between the minority and majority and this reduces the possibility of adaptability among them. In this state, dealing with the general and pervasive policies are the best instruments to fill and at least to inactivate these gaps. Because in this case, the parties of the gap, finds the differences in the least limit and see them bearable and even logical and do not feel the need to change. One of these policies is justice which in Imam (a.s.)'s idea and in the position of comparison with "جود", while pointing out that "العدل يضع الامور مواضعها" (Madikhah, 1994: 3607) has been crystalized in this way that "العدل سائس عام" i.e. justice is a pervasive policy. (Madikhah, 1994: 3607).

### **The stability of governments**

When any government (state) comes into power, either for its functions or to keep the power will need stability and peace and without that, it will not achieve its desires. Expressing this idea that ثبات الدول بالعدل (i.e. the stability of governments depends on justice), Imam Ali (a.s.) emphasizes on this subject-matter. (Justice is one of the pillars of faith and has four branches: Accuracy in understanding, seeking the depth of knowledge, clear and correct judgment, fixed and stable patience- So, anybody who could understand, achieve the depth of knowledge, be enriched by the headspring of religious laws, one who behave patiently and do the job completely, such a person will achieve salvation ). (Madikhah, 1994: 394).

There is an emphasize on policy making by the rulers and administrators of the government such that it could be just and this justice could encompass all walks of life and attract the highest rate of people satisfaction because of its achievements and one of the most important element for this target is the government stability.

### **Assuming power as a trust**

Opposite to the rulers who like Moaviyeh with an attitude towards power, Ali (a.s) was viewing it as a trust and his effort was to observe trust principles on power. This tendency can be identified through his deeds and his recommendations to his governors. In a letter to Ashath ibn Qays, the governor of Azerbaijan,

Hazrat introduces government as a trust in his hands. (Nahj-al-Balgaha:Letter 210). In another letter to Abdullah or Obeidullah ibn Abbas, Ali (a.s.) has reproached him because of negligence in maintain the trust and personal use of the power symbols. (Monqary, 1987:38).

### **Instruments of the control of political power in Imam Ali's perspective**

In Ali (a.s.)'s political thought, knowledge and virtue and combination of these two in practice are necessary conditions for the management and ruling. Because an unaware and non-virtuous ruler will mislead and corrupt the society. On this issue, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) states, " An ignorant person should not dominate the Muslims' chastity and life, otherwise he will mislead them. (Nahj-al-Balaghah:Sermon 131). Once again he states, " governing and administrating the society based on virtue and austerity will neither impose damage on anybody nor will destruct the plantation field of any tribe (Sermon 16). The instruments of the power control in Imam(a.s.)'s political thought includes: Religious-centered attitude, God-Oriented trend, Truth-centered attitude, divine virtue, justice-seeking, good record, faithfulness towards contract and and promise, showing affection and sympathy towards the poor, sincerity and truthfulness, indifference towards the world, specialty and skillfulness, honesty, necessity of obeying the legal guardian (ruler).

The outstanding feature of the government of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) is the presence of ethics besides politics. That is to say a government which is associated with truth-seeking, justice-centered attitude, political virtue, human dignity and people-oriented government. The components to moralize the politics has a colorful manifestation in the governmental method of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and this political ethics of Imam has arisen from elements whose most important ones are as follows:

### **Truth Seeking Attitude**

Seeking the truth is the first component to moralize the politics in the governmental method of Emir of Believers (a.s.). This component is one of the most basic pillars of the Alavi society and forms the infrastructure of such a community. When it is talked about the truth in its Godly sense, the God-centered concept comes into the

mind. God-centered attitude and fear of God are seen in many Mola's speeches clearly. (Nahj-al-Balaghah:Wisdom 242). And Imam Ali (a.s.) proved that in all parts of his life, he never was inattentive towards the God (Sermon 175).

### **Justice-Centered Attitude**

The second important component to moralize the politics in the Alavi government is justice-oriented attitude. Talking about justice-oriented attitude will not move ahead without knowing the justice. On this basis, the definition of justice in Imam Ali (a.s.)'s viewpoint will be a breakthrough. Imam Ali (a.s.) applies justice in the sense of placing everything in its right place (Nahj-al-Balaghah, Wisdom 437, Letter 53) and giving the right to its owner. (Ghorban Niya, 2001:412). Also in some cases, he defines justice in this manner: "Whatever you do not like for yourself, do not like for the others". (Nahj-al-Balaghah: Letter 31). Emir of Believers (a.s.) was looking to justice mostly from the social aspect rather than individual and personal aspect. (Motahari, 2000:60-61). And the issue which forced Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) to accept the caliphate was due to the fact that social justice was in danger". (Gorge Jordac, 1997:14/ii). That Hazrat, in his recommendation to his political administrators, puts forth the expansion and establishment of justice in the society. (Nahj-al-Balaghah: Letter 53) and asks them to have the performance of right and justice and attracting the satisfaction of the society individuals as the best job before them. (Jafari, 1994:217). Thus, he enforces his rulers to learn from the just government before them. (Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter 53) and in the thing which they are equal with each other, do not consider themselves as someone superior" (Nahj al-Balaghah: Letter 53).

### **Considering Power as an Instrument**

In Emir of Believers, Ali (a.s.)' worldview, power is considered a divine gift which is under the control of people as a trust. The trust for which any kind of improper use is a treason. (Jafari, 1994: 72). In this view, power is not a corrupted issue to be placed against the truth, unless it becomes an instrument for a wrong purpose. (Jafari, 1994: 77). It is learned from Hazrat Ali (a.s.)'s speeches that treason in trust or improper use of power will

occur when the power is converted into an instrument to satisfy the sensual and lust instincts, trickery, despotism, wealth-accumulation and seeking superiority. Thus, it is clear that despotism, authoritative attitude and being indifference towards people is not compatible with considering power as an instrument but it will be the obvious manifestations of considering power as a goal and the Islam-escaping view of the Machiavelli advocates. (Falsafi, 2000:88). Thus, it can be understood why The Master of the Virtuous consider the acceptance of power and government subject to the fulfillment of peoples' rights and amendment of them. (Nahj-al-Balaghah: Letter 53). In his purposeful view, government seems to be very low, even less than a dry blade of straw (Sermon 32). Imam has utilized the power only as a legitimate instrument to achieve his divine lofty goals and by instrumental view towards power was pursuing to perform the right and justice and to move the society towards evolution.

### **Political Virtue**

Political virtue means the preparedness of the politician to gain and make a full application of knowledge, experiences and use of the talents related to the justification of the peoples' rational life in a complete sincerity (Jafari, 1994:142). Politics in Imam Ali(a.s.)'s view is the firm administration of the society based on divine standards by resorting to the legitimate tools. (Mohammadi Ray Shahri, 2011: 26). Power in Imam(a.s.)'s view is the bests instrument to erect the competent government and to establish justice, welfare and to supply the rights and freedom of the citizens and social reforms.

### **Paying attention to humane dignities**

Human dignity is one of the other components to moralize the politics in the method of Alavi government. This element is introduced as the most ethical element of political ethics in Alavi government. The cases which are the sub-set of this component perhaps could be found in other components more or less. The manifestations of human dignity arise from the human innate disposition. (Falsafi, 2000:39).

### **People-Oriented Attitude**

People-oriented attitude, to value the people and paying attention to all of them are the lofty

manifestation of the social politics of the Alavi government. People-oriented attitude is one of the important components in the method of moralizing the politics in the side of Imam Ali (a.s.). This element is so important that now the political support of people towards the government has been converted into one of the most important reinforcing elements for the government. (Falsafi, 2000:165). Hazrat Ali (a.s.), the most just Islamic ruler mentions about his people-oriented attitude in this way:

“ I accepted the government only because of people insisting in it to administrate their rights”. (Nahj al-Balaghah: Sermon 92). Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.)’s people-oriented attitude displays itself in many cases. These signs are seen in cases such as asking for consultation, interpellation, further satisfaction of the people, active participation of people and creating friendship among the nations. For this purpose, Emir of Believers (a.s.) calls his rules to consult with scientists, wise people and sages. (Nahj al-Balaghah: Sermon 92).

### Conclusion

Ali (a.s.)’s view towards the power is ideal, credit-based and principle-based outlook and what was important to that Hazrat was to maintain the school of thought and opinion. He was viewing the power as an instrument to achieve his concerned lofty objectives. Basically, Hazrat was a principle-centered ruler rather than a power-centered one. Thus, he was not resorting to every actions to gain power and maintain it. Ali(a.s.)’s view towards the world, power, wealth and politics is that to use them minimum use and in his opinion, power is valuable when it is at the service of the truth and peoples’ salvation.

Ethical teachings in Islam is of specific significance. Islam is a social religion and its ethical issues is not merely personal and undertakes the training of human in the domain of management and politics as well. Amid these, the administrators of the government in their political behavior are ethically exposed to serious dangers and damages. Identifying these damages and finding the ways to treat them through using the teachings of the Emir of Believers (a.s.) in Nahj-al-Balaghah will be very applicable and effective for the administrators of the Islamic government.

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